JPAC Command Video Transcript (2007)

GRAPHICS:

Gulf War … One unaccounted for
Cold War … One hundred twenty unaccounted for
Vietnam War … One thousand eight hundred unaccounted for
Korean War … Eight thousand one hundred unaccounted for
World War Two … Seventy eight thousand unaccounted for
88,000 families … Waiting for answers.

Transition – POW/MIA logo dissolves into JPAC logo.

Introduction

The numbers are staggering. Eighty-eight thousand Americans still missing or unaccounted for.

Why do we keep searching? The answer is simple – you don't leave a fallen American behind. The families of those eighty eight thousand Americans deserve an answer.

JPAC Overview

The mission of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, or JPAC, is to achieve the fullest possible accounting of all Americans missing as a result of our Nation's past conflicts.

JPAC was created from the merger of the U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii, and Joint Task Force – Full Accounting. The 425 person organization, commanded by a flag officer, is a jointly manned unit with handpicked Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines, and Department of the Navy civilians with specialized skills. The laboratory portion of JPAC, referred to as the Central Identification Laboratory, or CIL, is the largest forensic skeletal laboratory in the world.

JPAC's highest priority is to investigate all leads and tips in the search for any Americans who may still be alive and held against their will. To date, the U.S. government has not found any evidence that there are still American POWs in captivity from past U.S. conflicts.

The core of JPAC's day-to-day operations involves searching for Americans who are missing in action but were never brought home. In order to return these missing in action to their families, JPAC follows three steps: one - analysis of case files & investigation of the suspected site; two - excavation of the site and recovery of any remains; and three – identification by JPAC's central identification laboratory.

Finding, recovering, identifying and ultimately returning an individual to their family begins with analysis and investigation.

Research & Investigation

JPAC experts begin the search by studying all known information regarding the circumstances of each American MIA loss. Historians and analysts gather information from U.S. veterans, foreign witnesses, archival records and other sources.

Soundbite: Chris McDermott, JPAC Historian
The sources of information and the sources of data that we need to help advance any particular case can include foreign local witnesses near the site, where the incident occurred, witnesses who are in the US Military, or in enemy forces at the time who may have information about the circumstances of that loss, veterans organizations that have collected data about their unit through time, official U.S. Army or U.S. military records, about operations that were ongoing official histories, but also secondary sources, and sometimes even newspaper or local accounts about what took place.

Analysts then create a case file for each unaccounted-for American. This file may include historical records, official correspondence, maps, photographs, daily activity logs, and military medical and personnel records of the missing person. These files are continuously updated until an identification is made.

Once all available information is studied, a field investigation team deploys to survey potential recovery sites providing recovery teams with accurate and up-to-date information about a case prior to their arrival.

Soundbite: Capt. William Dobbins, U.S. Marine Corps, JPAC Investigative Team Leader
As the investigation team, we're the lead elements in the recovery process. Our job is to go out there before an excavation team and what's known as a recovery team and actually find and area or burial or crash site through witness interview or site survey that will allow for productive recovery.

During a typical mission, teams interview potential witnesses, conduct on-site reconnaissance, and survey terrain for safety and logistical concerns. They also try to generate new leads that may result in future recoveries. But the main goal of the mission is to obtain enough information to correlate or connect a particular site with an MIA. If enough on-site evidence is found, the sites will be recommended for recovery and excavation, the second phase of returning an individual home.

Recovery & Excavation

JPAC's recovery missions can last from 35 to 60 days, depending on the location, terrain and nature of the recovery. A typical recovery team is 10 to 14 personnel. A military officer serves as team leader, and is responsible for the safety of the team and logistical details. A forensic anthropologist from JPAC's CIL serves as the recovery leader, and is

responsible for overseeing the recovery process and all evidence gathering. Other team members include a senior team sergeant, linguist, medic, life support technician, forensic photographer, explosive ordnance disposal technician and other specialties tailored to the mission, such as divers or mountaineering specialists.

At a recovery, the anthropologist directs the excavation much like a detective oversees a crime scene.

Soundbite: Dr. Elizabeth Goodman, JPAC Forensic Anthropologist
Once the recovery leader has determined what the perimeter of the site is, a site grid is established, so generally we use four-by-four meter grids on a site and we do a survey of pedestrians survey what is across the surface of the site and we use that as a proxy for what might be under the ground so areas where we find personal effects and life support are good indicators of where we should start. So once the grid is laid out we'll initiate excavation and generally you'll have one or two Americans excavating and local workers out in the bucket line, helping bucket up the dirt and that is sent to the screening station where Americans oversee the screening of all the sediment that is excavated. All wreckage, anything that is recovered from those screens that is not a rock or a stick, will go into a bucket for the recovery leader and the life support analyst to look at at the end of the day.

Recovery sites range in size from a few square meters, such as in individual burials, to areas larger than football fields for aircraft crashes. To help with the massive soil removal effort, JPAC may hire anywhere from a few to over one hundred local workers.

Investigative and recovery missions in search of missing Americans take JPAC personnel to remote and often dangerous locations all over the globe. JPAC routinely carries out negotiations and talks with foreign governments to ensure safe and successful missions wherever JPAC deploys throughout the world… from 16,000 foot mountaintops in the Himalayas and underwater sites such as Lake Tunis and off the coast of Palau.

<u>Arrival Ceremony</u>

After a successful recovery, JPAC conducts an arrival ceremony at Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii to honor those whose remains were recovered and who paid the supreme sacrifice in service to our nation.

Senior officers, veterans, community members and local active-duty military attend the ceremonies to pay their respects as the remains are transported from a U.S. military aircraft to JPAC's Central Identification Laboratory.

This is the third and final step, leading to the return of an individual to their family.

Identification

Soundbite: Dr. Tom Holland, JPAC Central Identification Laboratory Director
This is the largest skeletal identitification laboratory in the world and the scientific staff is composed of about fifty people, thirty of those are forensic anthropologists, that are dual hated for both work in the laboratory as well as in the field. We've got three forensic odontologists or forensic dentists. We've got nine aircraft wreckage specialists and then various support people as well

Soundbite: Dr. Goodman
When remains come into the lab, they are assigned to a forensic anthropologist for analysis and that anthropologist works with what we call "In the blind" which means they don't know who the individual is. And we do that to attempt to eliminate any bias from their analysis. So in creating the biological profile, they determine what the sex, age, race, and stature of the individual are. In addition, they look for any indication of trauma or illness which may help us determine who the individual is.

Any dental remains are examined by a forensic odontologist. Teeth are extremely important because an individual's dental record is often the best means of ID.

Aircraft pieces, weapons, uniform items and personal effects gathered from the site also provide important clues. Once the identification process is complete, any personal items such as watches, wedding rings, medals, wallets, letters or photographs are returned to the family.

In about seventy percent of all cases, the final step in the identification process is DNA analysis.

Soundbite: Dr. Holland
We're using what's called Mitochondrial DNA. There's two types of DNA in the body; There's the nuclear DNA which is what you hear about a lot on television and read in the news. But then there's Mitochondrial DNA that's a little different. And what's interesting about it is its inherited just from the mother which means that everybody has the mitochondrial DNA that they got from their mother. It's unlike the nuclear DNA which is from both parents. That means that there are a lot of maternal relatives out there that have the same mitochondrial DNA sequence and that's who we can go for referencing.

One of the biggest challenges JPAC faces today is the lack of reference samples from family members of those still unaccounted for. Any person who is a relative of an unaccounted for American is encouraged to contact the MIA's service casualty office to ensure there is a DNA reference sample on file for that service member.

JPAC only makes an identification when all available evidence – remains, artifacts, and historical documents – point to the same person. The ID process can take anywhere from a few months to several years to complete.

Soundbite: Dr. Holland
What a lot of people don't realize is there is never a single line of evidence that allows us to make an I.D. It is the totality of all these multiple lines of evidence: the dental, the anthropology, the artifact, the aircraft wreckage analysis.

Any unresolved cases are kept open with the hope that new evidence will be found or new technologies will be developed to make a future identification possible.

Conclusion

Once an American has been identified, their remains are returned to their family through their respective service casualty office. They are returned home with full military honors and given the respect they earned through service and sacrifice for their country.

One more family has answers.
One more American has finally come home.

Soundbite: Dr. Goodman
These are our countries heroes and I think that they deserve home. I think their families deserve to know all they can know about what happened at the time, and they deserve to have them home with them. I think it's a rare thing, you go anywhere around the world and people are, they marvel at the fact that our government does this, so it's very worthwhile.

Soundbite: Chris McDermott
There's also a sense that this is an ongoing tradition and this is what this command is about. We're going to keep looking no matter how difficult the obstacles are and we're going to keep trying to puzzle out even those cases that seem like they've set on the shelf for a very long time

Soundbite: Capt. Dobbins
JPAC is here to bring our fallen servicemen home. I can't think of a more noble mission, I can't think of a more comforting mission, to know that if tragedy strikes that I'm lost, that I know somebody is going to come find me and bring me home.

Soundbite: Dr. Holland
People ask why this is important, it's important because this country sent men in harms way and made them a promise, and the promise was that they would be returned and it's not a promise made by governments; it's a promise made by individuals. Each one of these men was somebody's father, they were somebody's brother, they were somebody's husband, and all of us are those things, husbands and brothers and wives and sisters. That's who makes the promise; we make the promise to them. One brother to another, one father to another, one husband to another, it's a promise that we're determined to keep.

Closing graphics